

## **THE RUSSIAN ROOTS OF ISLAMIC TERRORISM**

*Antero Leitzinger (March 2002)*

This article intends to trace the roots of Islamic terrorism, with special focus on Afghanistan. Notes are added on practical and philosophical problems of world media in finding the right track. From systematic errors in revealing little details, to serious misconceptions about basic facts and principles, we can relatively easily learn how much of "common knowledge" rests actually on superficial research and popular myths. Instead of becoming critical and aware of the traps laid around the issue, both Islamists and Islamophobes fail to recognize how they are manipulated.

### **Terrorism is real**

Terrorism is not as difficult a concept as some claim. It is a political ideology (-ism) on the use of terror, which is arbitrary, unrestricted and unspecified fear. This excludes traditional warfare against regular armies and police forces, and individual assassinations of public figures.

Neither separatism nor criminal violence as such is necessarily terrorism. To call an act terrorism, we should always ask: Does this really spread blind terror among the general populace? A bomb blown in a market place, or in a civilian airplane, intends to create common fear among customers and bystanders alike, because just about anybody could become a victim. The victims are typically anonymous, and the very idea of the act was to cause damage or a credible threat. The assassination of a political leader, throwing stones on occupation troops, or bombing of enemy positions during a declared war or after an order to surrender has been given, may be repulsive and kill innocent people, but there is no terror, if no average "man of the street" needs to feel uneasy about his security the next day. No women or children should need to fear that they could be mistaken as presidents, soldiers, or military installations. Somebody may have bad luck and

be targeted accidentally, but if it is terrorism, we will find ourselves asking: Why? What is the object?

Terrorism is rarely the ultimate end itself, as anarchy or communism is thought to be, but merely a method to promote some politics. That is why terrorists represent a political ideology. Even when they are in fact nothing but common criminals or psychopaths, terrorists make efforts to find a political excuse for their acts.

We know that not every political movement has created a terrorist splinter group, or served as an excuse for terrorism. Actually, terrorism has been the favourite method of extreme socialists only – both of the (left-wing) international, and the (right-wing) national varieties. Since the Jacobins of the French revolution held a "Reign of Terror" in 1794, the international socialists (communists) and national socialists (fascists) have shared a common tendency to use terrorism.

A clear definition of terrorism helps to identify and trace it through history. It can be dated and located. This makes it very real – and thus also possible to be exterminated.

### **How Socialists became Islamic terrorists**

Modern terrorism was born within a year, 1967-1968. International socialists (communists) started the fashion all over the world simultaneously, which should make us suspicious about the common roots. National socialists followed suit, turning Marxists of Muslim origin into Islamists of Marxist origin.

In May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1967, Yuri **Andropov** took over the leadership of the KGB. The Russian security services evolved into a state within the Soviet state, as it became clear when Andropov became the communist party's general secretary after Leonid **Brezhnev's** death, in 1982. During Andropov's era, which was far longer than that of any other KGB chief, the Soviet secret services supported international terrorism through satellite states and Marxist "liberation fronts". "On becoming chairman of the KGB in 1967, Andropov immediately announced his intention to

revive KGB 'special actions' as an essential tool of Soviet policy during the Cold War." (Andrew & Mitrokhin, p. 374)

The man who became Andropov's deputy was former Azerbaijani KGB chief Semyon **Tsvigun**, who committed suicide on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1982. His wife was the sister of Brezhnev. Eduard **Topol** wrote a spy novel about the case, titled "*Red Square*". In the novel, Tsvigun's widow accuses Andropov for being an anti-Semite, organizing international terrorism, and having his subordinate assassinated. Reality, however, does not corroborate any rift within the KGB. Tsvigun's son became a KGB officer too, and was appointed as a Soviet diplomat in Cairo from August 1984. Tsvigun's son-in-law became the main supplier of arms to Islamist terrorists in Afghanistan, by 1995.

On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1967, violent student demonstrators met the Shah of Iran in West Germany. All of free Europe was plagued by student demonstrations in May 1968, causing a nearly revolutionary situation in France. Numerous left-wing terrorist cells were formed in Germany, Italy, and other western countries. Their activities peaked in 1977, after which the West German terrorists retired in communist East Germany.

The (North Irish) IRA and (Basque) ETA started their terrorism in 1968, with peaks around 1976. Andropov considered an IRA request for arms delivery for three years until subscribing it in 1972. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, p. 378 and 384-385)

German and Italian left-wing terrorists cooperated by summer 1969, and in October 1971, altogether 16 terrorist groups held a meeting in Florence, Italy. Beside the IRA and ETA, many Palestinian and Latin American (ERP, ELN, MLN, MIR) groups joined to the international terror network by 1973.

In the USA, Soviet agents incited racial tension by writings in the name of the *Ku Klux Klan*, and by a bomb explosion in New York City, in summer 1971. (Andrew & Mitrokhin,

p. 238) The same year, Soviet agents made contacts to a Quebecois separatist group, the FLQ.

In Latin America, communist Cuba was the source of revolutionary activities in many countries, although the KGB kept its own agents there too. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, p. 386) In October 1967, "**Che Guevara**", whose girl-friend was an East German, was executed in Bolivia, becoming a romantic idol for teenage girls. Thirty-four years later, his picture could be seen on the T-shirts of young Palestinian brawlers. In Mexico, the KGB was involved in student riots from July to October 1968, prior to the Olympic Games. Uruguay experienced urban guerrilla activities by the MLN, peaking between 1968 and 1972. Argentina followed between 1970 and 1975. Communists had big hopes on Chile, but were bitterly disappointed by the military coup in 1973.

By the end of the 1970s, communist optimism was definitely on the decline everywhere in the world. At that point, the KGB desperately needed any kind of a boost of revolutionary spirits. Surprisingly, the Middle East came to rescue.

In December 1967, a Lebanese Christian, George **Habash**, who had been a Pan-Arabic national socialist, had broadened his field by founding the PFLP, a Palestinian organization. Although it split already by the next year, the PFLP remained the most pro-Soviet Palestinian terrorist group, with widest global ties. It caused the *Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party* to adopt the Palestinian cause in 1968. In July 1970, Andropov allowed the first direct Soviet arms delivery to the PFLP. From that on, both the KGB and - perhaps even more so - the Russian military intelligence, GRU, provided Palestinian terrorists with arms and training. (Segaller, p. 126-127; Livingston & Halevy, p. 140; Lunev, p. 80; Kuzichkin, p. 206; Andrew & Mitrokhin, p. 381) From 1972 on, this was co-ordinated by Habash, who had close connections to Japanese and Latin American terrorist groups. (Livingston & Halevy, p. 208-209)

The man chiefly responsible for exporting Palestinian terrorism was Wadi **Haddad**, deputy leader of the PFLP, recruited as agent "Natsionalist" by the KGB in 1970. Andropov revealed his aims in a report to Brezhnev himself: "The nature of our relations with W. Haddad enables us to control the external operations of the PFLP to a certain degree, to exert influence in a manner favorable to the Soviet Union and also to carry out active measures in support of our interests through the organization's assets while observing the necessary conspirational secrecy." (Andrew & Mitrokhin, p. 380)

The once fashionable airplane hijackings had been begun by the PFLP in July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1968. At that time, the Soviet Union, having supported the establishment of Israel and armed its forces 20 years earlier, had already invested a lot of resources into the Palestinian cause and Arab Socialism. Arms had been initially smuggled through Egypt. (Barron, p. 77)

"By the summer of 1968, the Soviet Union had progressed far toward converting Egypt into its principal base of subversion against the Arab world." (Barron, p. 62) Thirty-three years later, Egypt was the principal base of Islamic terrorists. Soviet Union, however, failed in Egypt. In May 1971, Anwar **Sadat** wiped out most of KGB agents. In July 1972, Soviet advisors were expelled from Egypt. Eight years later, Sadat paid for this with his life, being assassinated by members of an Islamist group. Sadat's peace policy toward Israel made it easy for the remnants of the KGB network to ally with the right-wing *Muslim Brotherhood*. This is the background of Ayman az-**Zawahiri**, the second man of *al-Qayda*.

Yasser **Arafat**'s *al-Fatah* organization received its first Soviet arms shipment in September 1972. Palestinians were, however, split into pro-Iraqi and pro-Syrian parties and factions. Although both Iraq and Syria were ruled by an Arab Socialist *Baath* party, and extremely friendly toward the Soviet Union after the end of 1950s, the deepening friction between these two Arab states cut through the Palestinians, and frustrated Soviet efforts to unite Arabs against Israel and the western world.

The Yom Kippur War of 1973, and the subsequent oil embargo from October 1973 to March 1974, which was aimed against the USA, taught the KGB two lessons: that the traditional, orthodox Arab Socialist partners and their Palestinian proxies could not be trusted and achieved little through military endeavours and terrorism; but that the future was economic, and lay with the oil-fields in Saudi Arabia and Gulf emirates. Thus Political Islam, or Islamism, replaced Socialism as the most promising basis for winning Arab hearts and hurting western interests in the Middle East. After the debacle in Egypt, the KGB turned toward Saudi Arabia, where King **Faysal** had been assassinated in May 1975, and King **Khalid** ruled until 1982. Here, the KGB could find most valuable connections through the *Muslim Brotherhood*.

The key link may have been Muhammad Maruf ad-**Dawalibi**, former Prime Minister of Syria, and founder of the *Islamic Socialist Front* in autumn 1949. He had declared already in April 1950, that Arabs would prefer "thousands time more to become a Soviet Republic than to be spoils of Jews". (Reissner, p. 332, 355 and 422-423) Dawalibi's preference for Soviet rule had not been shaken by Soviet support for Israel as late as September 1951. Instead, he recommended Arab leaders to seek even harder for Soviet support. (Reissner, p. 357 and 366) Dawalibi was exiled from Syria, but he became a councillor of King Khalid, and the chairman of the *Islamic Conference* that convened in Pakistan in 1976. (Reissner, p. 394 and 423)

Saudi Arabia became after 1974 the main financier of international terrorism, regardless of the professed Atheism of Palestinian Marxist groups. For example, only in the year 1989, the PLO received 85 million US\$ and Hamas 72 million US\$ Saudi payments. At the same time, Kuwait too financed Hamas with 60 million US\$. (Goodwin, p. 16-17)

This policy, explained as payoffs to keep terrorists away from Saudi targets, was supervised by the Saudi intelligence chief, the king's nephew, Prince **Turki**, from

1977 until his unexplained sacking at the end of August, 2001.

Another Saudi god-father of Islamism was the senile Mufti Abdulaziz **Bin Baz** (d. 1999), who declared that the sun revolved around the earth (1966), and that the earth was flat (1969), among other equally "Islamic" doctrines. (Goodwin, p. 211) With Saudi money, such ideas were transmitted through the *Islamic Conference*, and its organizer, the *Muslim World League*, all over Muslim world.

Iraq was in mid-1970s Russia's most trusted ally in the Muslim world (except for South Yemen, which was already officially a Soviet satellite), and the only nominally non-communistic state, where the KGB ceased its activities, because there appeared to be no need for any supervision. When **Saddam** Hussein had some Iraqi communists executed, in May 1978, the KGB became worried, but the outbreak of Iraqi-Iranian war in 1980, came as a surprise to Soviet diplomacy. For a while, Soviet Union wavered in whom to support, but when the USA, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia had made their choice for Iraq, the Soviet Union switched sides. Following this, many Soviet-sponsored terrorists had to move from Iraq to Iran, Syria, or Lebanon.

Iran became Russia's most loyal ally after the Islamic revolution in 1979. This relationship has lasted over two decades, and is still cherished by the Islamists among Shi'ite clergy and security services. When Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan later the same year, there was only one spontaneous demonstration in Tehran, after which Iran has tamely followed Russia's actions against neighbouring Muslim people.

The Iranian revolution took the KGB by surprise, but it was a pleasant surprise, and the Soviet Union chose to side with the Islamist revolutionaries already by November 1978. Azerbaijan's contemporary president, former party leader and KGB chief (a successor and friend of Tsvigun), Hayder **Aliyev**, was the expert on Middle East, who had soon convinced the Politburo, that Ayatollah **Khomeini** should be supported by the Soviet

Union. (Taheri, p. 218) This assessment caused a permanent division within the Iranian communist (*Tudeh*) party, because it was instructed to support Khomeini despite the doubts of the party's own general secretary. He was replaced by a relative of Khomeini. (Kuzichkin, p. 264 and 285)

Among the closest associates of Khomeini, there were many Communists who had conveniently grown beards. Mustafa Ali **Chamran** had studied in California and Egypt before he founded a *Red Shi'ite* secret society. His pupils included later foreign minister Ibrahim **Yazdi**, oil minister Mohammed **Gharazi**, and a Lebanese fellow student in Berkeley University, Hussein Shaikh al-**Islam**, who led the occupation of the US Embassy in Tehran. This occupation, shortly before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, focused Iranian radicalism into anti-Americanism. (Taheri, p. 78 and 139-140) Mohammed **Beheshti**, whose death at a bombing on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1981, remained a mystery, had resided in East Germany. Khomeini's early companion and foreign minister, Sadegh **Ghotbzadeh**, was a link to Syria. Most left-wing radicals were repressed only after summer 1981, by which time many former Communists had successfully accommodated with the new regime. Both Ghotbzadeh and Chamran had received Palestinian terrorist training. As a student in the USA, Ghotbzadeh had been recruited by the GRU. (Livingston & Halevy, p. 153-154; Kuzichkin, p. 302)

"It is significant that anti-Americanism was first propagated as a major theme of Muslim fundamentalism by young men and women from Islamic countries who had spent time in the United States as students or workers." (Taheri, p. 206) These included the founding father of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Said **Qutb**, who had lived in the USA for two years around 1949/1950. The four pilots of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, included one native German citizen, whose Moroccan father was no Islamist at all, a Lebanese of liberal background, and a United Arab Emirates' subject, both of whom had spent five years in Germany, and the Egyptian-born terrorist leader Muhammad **Atta**, who had immigrated into Germany nine years earlier.



Daniel **Pipes'** article "The Western Mind of Radical Islam" describes well, how so many Islamic terrorists actually adopted more ideas from contacts to western society than from their own traditions: "Fundamentalist leaders tend to be well acquainted with the West, having lived there, learned its languages, and studied its cultures. ... Indeed, the experience of living in the West often turns indifferent Muslims into fundamentalists. ... In contrast to this ostentatious familiarity with Western ways, fundamentalists are distant from their own culture. ... Having found Islam on their own as adults, many fundamentalists are ignorant of their own history and traditions."

(<http://www.danielpipes.org/articles/199512.shtml>)

This became very obvious through the biographies of those who committed the suicide attacks of September 2001, and who were typically from wealthy families, liberally educated, and had lived many years in Hamburg, London, and America. Pipes takes notice of the fact that "fundamentalist Muslims" (or rather, "Islamists", as they care little of traditions and their true fundamentals), have introduced distinctly Christian notions into their religion. He presents plenty of detailed examples, among others that "fundamentalists have turned Fridays into a Sabbath, something it had not previously been. ... Ignorant of the spirit underlying the Shari'a, fundamentalists enforce it along territorial, not personal lines..." (<http://www.danielpipes.org/articles/199512.shtml>), and so forth.

While original Islamic law had complex separate provisions for Jews and Christians, Islamists tend to regard them as intolerantly as non-Christians used to be regarded in pre-19th century Europe. Islamists also tend to confuse Islamic concepts (f. ex. regarding ritual purity, food prescriptions, etc.) with similar but not identical Christian concepts. A visible example is the uniform-like "Islamic head-scarf", which could be derived rather from prescriptions in the Epistle of St. Paul than from interpretations of the Koran, or from traditional customs. There is also a curious tendency to threat apostates with death sentence (while the Koran forbids the use of force in matters of religion),

and to prevent female followers from marrying Christian men, while men have always been allowed to marry Christian women, and the Koran explicitly orders the same marriage restrictions or exemptions equally for both sexes. Actually, it was the Christian Canon and laws (for example in Russia until the beginning of 20th century), that threatened an apostate with death penalty and prevented mixed marriages. When Christian societies found out that such laws had no base in religion, Islamists took them over, although they had even less base in Islam. For example, in the Malaysian state of Sabah, Muslim women were banned from mixed marriages only after the 1970s, when Islamism became a global fashion. Fundamentally anti-Islamic fashions and interpretations of religion were exported from Saudi Arabia globally since the 1970s, with heavy financial backing.

Pipes describes the way Islamists "have set up church-like structures. The trend began in Saudi Arabia, where the authorities built a raft of new institutions..., for example: the Secretary of the Muslim World League, the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference... The Islamic Republic of Iran soon followed the Saudi model and went beyond it..." (<http://www.danielpipes.org/articles/199512.shtml>)

Anti-Americanism became a strong common denominator for not only Muslims, but also Christians and Atheists in the Middle East. This was not so surprising, since not only Habash, but also another Marxist Palestinian party leader, Nayef **Hawatmeh** of the DFLP, was a Christian. (IHT 9.8.1999) The PLO included many Christian Arabs, but since 1985, it too adopted an "Islamic" policy. Arafat's own *Al-Fatah* organization together with the *Communist Party of Jordan* allied with the *Muslim Brotherhood*. (Bodansky, p. 21)

In the Karabakh conflict, Khomeini supported Christian Armenians, whose terrorist movement ASALA had been originally established by a former Iraqi member of the PFLP, "**Hagop Hagopian**", and had shared common training camps in Lebanon with the PFLP, from 1977 to 1982. (Seale, p. 337-338)

After July 1983, ASALA disappeared in the same Lebanese valley, where another anti-Turkish organization, the PKK, emerged next summer. This was no novelty, since pro-Soviet Armenians had participated in the founding of an anti-Turkish Kurdish party already in 1927 - also in Lebanon. Both ASALA and PKK were rumoured to have been brainchildren of a Soviet Armenian KGB officer Karen **Brutents**. (MN 10.3.1999)

Another Armenian terrorist faction, renamed ARA, moved from Iraqi and PFLP protection to Iranian and Lebanese (actually Syrian) custody by the end of 1984. This coincided with the swift of Soviet sympathy from Iraq to Iran during the Iraqi-Iranian war. (Taheri, p. 112 and 278) They were activated against Azerbaijani Muslims in 1987.

The "Islamic revolution" in Iran inspired also frustrated left-wing Arabs. The Arab world had been demoralized by the 1973 war, by failure to gain enough from the oil crisis, and by the Lebanese civil war in 1975-1976. Even a Christian Marxist like Jérôme **Shahin** came to the conclusion, that neither Arab Socialism nor Pan-Arabic unity, but only Islam could inspire Arab "masses". Another Marxist, Anwar **Abdulmalek**, advocated "Political Islam", and described Khomeini as "progressive by definition" because of the innate anti-Americanism of Islamic heritage. The "Abdelmalek-Shahin syndrome" gave suddenly hope to alienated left-wing intellectuals. (Sivan, p. 161-168)

Islamism became the new ideology for Algerian independence champion Ahmad **Ben Bella** (1984), who had been decorated with a Lenin medal twenty-one years earlier. (Taheri, p. 192-193 and 296) In Morocco, Socialists turned into Islamists included Abdulkarim **Moti** and Abdussalam **Yassine**. (Taheri, p. 195) The latter published an open letter to the king in 1974, was imprisoned, and lives still under house arrest as the leader of *Adl wa Ihsane* (Justice and Well-fare) Party. (NZZ 2.7.1999)

This conversion from Marxism to Islam was no worse a spiritual problem than the conversion of traditionally deeply Roman Catholic nationalist organizations like the IRA and ETA, into Marxist terrorist groups in the 1960s.

German right-wing terrorists of the *Wehrsportgruppe* felt no problems either, in being trained in 1981 by left-wing Palestinians in Lebanon. (NZZ 8.1.1985)

Despite possible ideological objections, those communists and other extremists, who remained loyal to Russia's strategic mission in the Middle East, were ready to serve it under a new ideological disguise. This was noticed by some researchers by mid-1980s: "The most significant new factor is the Soviet realization that two movements - radical-revivalist Islam (commonly but misleadingly called 'fundamentalist') and traditionalist Islam - have become the most decisive trends in the Muslim world, and that if Moscow is to have any influence there, it must find a way to exploit and manipulate them - particularly the radical-revivalists, who are most useful to them. ... They know that their hopes for success lie in persuading the radical-revivalist Muslims to see the Soviets as an instrument to be used against a common enemy, the West." (Afghanistan..., p. 244)

### **Soviet Islamists in Afghanistan**

Russia has long traditions in the political art of provocation, dating back to the imperial age, when the secret police finally lost track of its own web of "agents provocateurs", who successfully infiltrated and compromised opposition parties by committing themselves to so serious crimes, that they could just as well be considered revolutionaries in police disguise. Provocations were adopted by the Soviet secret services, and widely used in the "ethnic conflicts" that appeared suddenly in Central Asia and the Caucasus, between 1987 and 1993. (See: Caucasus...!)

Provocations were exercised already during the invasion of Afghanistan, as has been recently (in February 2002) revealed by Vasili **Mitrokhin**, a KGB officer from 1956 to 1984, who prepared a secret report in 1987 and defected to Britain in 1992. He describes "false flag" operations, where "Soviet-trained Afghan guerrilla units posed as CIA-supported, anti-Soviet mujahidin rebels [Islamic freedom-fighters] to create confusion and flush out genuine rebels".

In January 1983, there were 86 such "false bands", trained by KGB officer V. **Kikot** of the 8<sup>th</sup> Department of the "Directorate S". Kikot was transferred from Cuba, and was acquainted with training Palestinian terrorists. There were also over 110 agents infiltrated in Iran and over 200 agents in Pakistan, including Murtaza **Bhutto**, son of the former president and brother of the future prime minister. (WP 24.2.2002; IHT 25.2.2002)

Former KGB general Oleg **Kalugin** assured correctly on a BBC World News TV discussion on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001, that there were more terrorists of *al-Qayda* who had been trained by the KGB than by the CIA, but his words were not taken seriously by other debaters, who preferred to blame the prevailing poverty in Palestinian refugee camps, American non-involvement there, American involvement in assisting Afghan freedom-fighters in the 1980s, and global inequality, as breeding-grounds for terrorism. For some reason, logically inconsistent and practically unfounded theories remain far more popular in western media than the simple facts confessed by top-ranking ex-Soviet officials.

Afghan freedom fighters recognized Gulbuddin **Hikmatyar** as a KGB provocateur already by 1985. Two-thirds of the conflicts between Afghan guerrilla factions were caused by KGB provocation. (Bradsher, p. 295; Afghanistan..., p. 203-227 and 395) This should have been no surprise, since Hikmatyar is told to have spent four years in the Afghan communist party (PDPA) before becoming a "devout" Muslim. (<http://www.afghan-web.com/bios/today/ghekmattyar.html>) Even an Afghan left-wing feminist group accuses Hikmatyar for participation in an assassination carried out by the KGB in 1985. (<http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/3340/rawa.html>)

"The Soviets manipulated and exploited Gulbaddin Hekmatiyar's *Hizbi-i Islami* [Islamic Party] primarily through the numerous agents in his military council, which included representatives not only from the Muslim Brotherhood but also from Libya, Iran, and the PLO. In the mid-1980s, Gulbaddin Hekmatiyar was known to have

visited Libya and Iran and was rumored to have visited the PDRY [communist South Yemen]." (Bodansky, p. 22-23)

As CNN's reporter Richard **Mackenzie** has said, Hikmatyar "gained notoriety in Afghanistan for killing more fellow Mujahideen than he did communists."

Many observers predicted early enough, what would be the alternative to communist power in Kabul: "Since 1978 the Communist regimes in Kabul have consistently identified Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the most radical figure, as the primary or even the sole leader of the entire Resistance... In the event that the Communist regimes in Kabul were ever to be replaced or joined by the most radical elements in the Resistance and these elements attempted to implement their extremist programs, it appears certain that they would meet with massive public opposition, setting off disorders which would provide the Soviets with an opportunity to return in the guise of providing stability. In such a case, an international community convinced that the Afghans are 'incapable' of self-government would hardly protest." (Afghanistan..., p. 9) This was very much what happened indeed, and within 15 years from this prophesy, the time seemed ripe for Russia to make it happen.

Although Hikmatyar was (like the *Taliban* leaders later) a Sunni Muslim, he regarded Iran as his model, and took refuge in Iran, where he sympathized the *Taliban* until he was forced to disappear from Tehran in February 2002. A great mystery, wondered by many western researchers and journalists who had observed the Afghan war, was how notoriously anti-American Hikmatyar, despite his bad reputation and terrorist sympathies, became a favourite of the Pakistani ISI (until 1993), and thus a main recipient of US military aid for Afghan guerrillas in the mid-1980s. Several explanations, including KGB infiltration of the CIA (or rather ISI), have been provided. (Arney, p. 160-161; IHT 28.1.1994)

The most probable explanation is simply that the CIA possessed more money than wisdom. A former CIA agent, Reuel Marc **Gerecht**, described in his article "*The*

*Counterterrorist Myth*", how throughout the Afghan war, the Directorate of Operations never developed a team of Afghan experts. The first case officer to have some proficiency in an Afghan language did not arrive until 1987. After 1989, the CIA abandoned Afghanistan, in the firm belief that the Cold War was over, and for the following ten years, no CIA official paid a visit to the legendary commander Ahmadshah **Masud** in Afghanistan, to learn that the war was far from over yet. (<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2001/07/gerecht.htm>)

Although American contribution to the Afghan war has been exaggerated, it remains a dark cloud over the CIA's credibility. The British were critical about CIA's policy, and far more efficient by providing Stinger missiles to Masud, who used them to expel the Russians. Hikmatyar sold his Stingers to Iran in 1987. (Cooley, p. 92 and 173)

Russia's aid for the communist army exceeded all foreign aid to the guerrillas. From 1986 to 1990, the USA sent weapons worth of 2,5 to 3,2 billion US\$ and Saudi Arabia for the same amount, while the Soviet Union provided an arsenal worth an estimated 5,7 billion US\$, according to moderate estimates. (Goodwin, p. 16 and 82; NZZ 26.-27.9.1998; Reuters 1.4.2001) Saudi Arabia may have continued financing its own proxies in the years 1991-1992. But this was certainly more than equalled by Russia's shipments, estimated as high as worth of 4 billion US\$ annually (20-30 daily flights), continuing at least until 1991. (Khabir **Ahmad**'s report in "Venäjän ja Itä-Euroopan instituutin Tiedonantoja ja katsauksia" 3/2001)

There are discrepancies between the numbers presented in different sources, but whatever reasons the USA may have had for spending money on Hikmatyar, Russia's legacy prolonged the most destructive civil war beyond the official disintegration of the Soviet Union and the fall of Kabul.

Afghan communists have a broad history of "turning coats", or to be more accurate, of growing beards and adopting the title "Mullah" attached to a pseudonym. Prior to the Soviet invasion, the communists had been divided into three factions:

1. Maoist radicals of the *Khalq* faction, led by Hafizullah **Amin** (1979), who was deposed by the Soviets. These included army officer Turan **Abdurrahman**, who joined the guerrilla already in 1979, and reappeared as "Mullah Borjan", the supreme commander of the *Taliban* military in 1996, before he was killed under unknown circumstances;
2. Moderates of the *Khalq* faction, led by Nurmuhammad **Taraki** (1978-1979), who was deposed by Amin. These included defence minister Shahnawaz **Tanai**, and several other generals, who joined Hikmatyar between 1990 and 1992, but defected to the *Taliban* by 1996, organizing their air force, air defence (Muhammad **Gilani**), artillery (Shah **Sawar**), communications units, military intelligence, and security services (Muhammad **Akbar**);
3. Kremlin loyalists of the *Parcham* faction, led by Babrak **Karmal** (1979-1986), **Najibullah** (1986-1992), and Abdurrashid **Dostum**, who is an ethnic Uzbek general. Dostum's air force bombed Kabul to ruins before it too defected to the *Taliban* in May 1997. Dostum himself joined the "Northern Alliance" with the legal government only when he was reduced to military marginality, and although he generously received an office in Kabul, he would still like to challenge the interim government, and remains a trouble-maker in the northern provinces, with support from Uzbekistan.

*Taliban* commandants were identified in an excellent article by Stéphane **Allix** in *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 1997. They all had a past in the communist *Khalq* faction. The KGB was not supposed to recruit agents among them, but concentrated on the *Parcham* faction, (Kuzichkin, p. 312) but the GRU must have been interested specially in recruiting *Khalq* officers.

The founder of the *Taliban*, "Mullah" (without much of clerical education) **Omar**, was a comrade-in-arms of "Mullah Borjan" in the *Islamic Revolutionary Movement*, before they founded a new party of their own, by autumn



1994. Their credentials in the resistance were marginal compared to those of Masud. The same applies to Osama **Bin Ladin**, who arrived in Pakistan by 1984 and may have participated in one battle but boasted as a war veteran to his young idolaters. According to CIA agent Milton **Bearden**, Bin Ladin fought a battle only in spring 1987, although his biographer Yossef **Bodansky**, blessed with rather vivid imagination, credits him also with a couple of skirmishes in 1986 and 1989. (Bodansky, p. 19 and 25)

Actually, when the Palestinian organizer of Arab aid, Abdullah **Azzam**, wanted to send volunteers, money, and arms to assist Masud, Bin Ladin had his mentor assassinated in autumn 1989, took over the organization (*al-Qayda*), sent the volunteers back home (Kabul remained to be liberated, as well as the rest of Central Asia), and let Hikmatyar have the rest. Bin Ladin left his base in the Pakistani frontier town of Peshawar in an unexplained panic (telling that Saudi Arabia had hired the ISI to kill him), in 1991, while communists were still in power in Kabul, and just when things started to move in Soviet Central Asia. He had quite apparently no interest in destabilizing the Russian sphere of influence, and in contrary, directed the activities of Arab adventurers against pro-American governments.

During the Afghan war, Arabs hanging around in the region had been of little use (the Afghans detested them because of their religious fervour, lack of respect for traditions, and boasting habit), and although they pretended to be interested in Afghanistan, they were in fact hiding in Peshawar from their own police. When visiting Afghanistan, they were merely tolerated because of their connections to financial aid. (NZZ 26.-27.9.1998) Most of the "Arab Afghans" were Egyptians in exile, but some Arab countries dumped there common criminals. In 1991, they were recruited to fight in Algeria, and in 1993-1994, they were used by Hikmatyar to assist Aliyev and Russian-sponsored terrorists in Azerbaijan. (Cooley, p. 178-179)

Bin Ladin returned to Afghanistan only when in need of refuge for himself, invited by Hikmatyar in 1996, and soon found out, that meanwhile, all his fellow terrorists had defected – alongside with the communist generals – to the self-appointed "Mullah" Omar. Bin Ladin followed suit.

### **Russia's sponsorship of the *Taliban* and *al-Qayda***

Post-Soviet Russia faked friendship with the legal Afghan government of Burhanuddin **Rabbani** (1992-2001), while its "former" communist generals (seven out of eleven) served Hikmatyar, with the main exception of Dostum. According to Peshawar University professor Azmat Hayat **Khan**, the communist army was divided with the explicit intention of continuing destabilization, and retaining their party affiliations and structures for future use. ("Central Asia" 31/1992, p. 62) The *Taliban* was, however, sometimes suspicious about its former communists, many of whom may have been purged in September 1998, when three generals, twenty-two officers, and thirty other people were arrested for involvement in a communist conspiracy. (Radio Russia 27.9.1998; [http://www.subcontinent.com/sapra/terrorism/tr\\_1998\\_12\\_001-s.htm](http://www.subcontinent.com/sapra/terrorism/tr_1998_12_001-s.htm))

When Rabbani's defence minister Masud, the archenemy of the KGB, was about to restore peace in Afghanistan by 1995, against all odds, Russia promoted a new rebel movement, the *Taliban*. Money, arms and technological know-how were channelled not only through the above-mentioned agents, but also directly by flights from Russia, and probably overland through Turkmenistan. This started before Bin Ladin's arrival, and Bin Ladin – through his Egyptian connections, close to Hikmatyar – remained servile to Russian interests.

First of all, Russia was worried about the future of ex-Soviet Tajikistan, which enjoyed a short period of democracy at the very same time when Rabbani and Masud, both ethnic Tajiks, were restoring order in Kabul. The Russian army restored old communists to power in Tajikistan, fought a bloody civil war, and put pressure on the Afghan government not to tolerate Tajik guerrillas on

its soil. *Rossiiskiye Vesti* wrote in September 1994, that the Tajik civil war could be finished only by pacifying Afghanistan. (The Times 8.5.1995)

Secondly, Saparmurat **Niyazov**, the communist leader of Turkmenistan, initiated, in November 1994, a project to build oil and gas pipelines through Afghanistan to Pakistan. (Guardian 3.10.1995) This was further promoted by the mighty *Gazprom* company, whose former manager Viktor **Chernomyrdin** is, as its shareholder, one of the world's richest men, and happened to be Russian prime minister from 1993 to 1998. This end of the pipeline project has received little attention from Western media, while the other end has produced speculations ever since the Californian-based UNOCAL and the Saudi Arabian *Delta Oil* companies were attracted to the project by October 1995. Originally, also the Argentinean oil company *Bridas* was involved, but because it would have preferred a routing through Iran, it was dropped out of the project. (Der Spiegel 1/7.1.2002)

*Gazprom* succeeded in having UNOCAL to sign a deal on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1996. This became a political nuisance to the USA, and finally, UNOCAL cancelled it. However, neither the government of Turkmenistan, nor the Russian gas giant *Gazprom*, suffered from bad publicity. They met no political objections to continue negotiations with the *Taliban*. (IPS 30.4.1999; AsiaPulse via COMTEX 31.10.2000) Niyazov personally put on hold the promising alternative, American-sponsored Trans-Caspian Pipeline Project for the export of Turkmen gas to Turkey. (The Monitor 4.1.2001)

Turkmenistan's Afghan connections, both economical and political, remained relatively unnoticed by the media, because the country was almost as closed from the outside world as it used to be during the Soviet times. After the *Taliban's* defeat and the escape of *al-Qayda* militants toward the north-east corner of Iran, or toward Turkmenistan, Niyazov had to cut his links by a thorough purge in the army and secret services. Muhammad **Nazarov**, chief of the KNB (Turkmen KGB), was publicly reprimanded, demoted from four-star general

to lieutenant general, and dismissed on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2002. He was replaced by the interior minister. The defence minister and head of military counterintelligence, Gurbanduri **Begenzhev**, also lost his posts in disgrace. The same happened to Khosse **Reymov**, another major general, who had been responsible for border controls. The changing of the guard came as a surprise as just weeks before, the security services were being presented as a pillar of Niyazov's authoritarian regime. Some sources suggested that the US ambassador had complained in private to Niyazov of crime within the Turkmen secret services. Niyazov's "fight against infection" within the KNB began immediately after the meeting. (TOL 18.3.2002)

While Niyazov and Chernomyrdin had personal financial interests to support the *Taliban*, US Vice President Al **Gore** signed the infamous 1995 US-Russian weapons agreement, which exempted Russia from sanctions, although Russia would sell arms to Iran. This secret agreement violated the rules of 1992, by the US Congress. Gore's excuse was that Russia agreed upon not selling nuclear technology, and to stop all arms exports to Iran by the end of 1999. This, of course, never happened, and when the failed agreement was leaked to *The New York Times* in October 2000, Russia declared its intention not to keep it anyway. (Reuters 31.10. and 22.11.2000) The case illustrates how deeply Chernomyrdin was involved in businesses with Islamic extremists, and how Russia succeeded in having Bill **Clinton's** administration participate in shady deals against American public interests. There were also rumours of promised concessions in the pipeline projects, or in financial support to Gore's presidential campaign. Gore's loss at the November 2000 elections was a devastating surprise for Russian political establishment.

Thirdly, a KGB officer, Viktor **But** (Victor Bout), flew arms to the *Taliban* until 2001. The beginning of this business enterprise would have remained unknown, if a Russian airplane would not have been spotted at Kandahar airport. According to But's explanations, the arms shipment, originally intended to the government in Kabul, was forced to land at Kandahar by a MiG 21, on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1995. This

happened exactly at a time when the *Taliban* was about to be routed. Instead of a rapid disaster at this critical point, the reinforced *Taliban* turned to attack, and took over the town of Herat by September 5<sup>th</sup>. The Russian pilots were kept as hostages in Kandahar until next August 16<sup>th</sup>, when they miraculously escaped and were decorated by the Russian president. Soon after, in September 1996, an well-armed *Taliban* advanced all the way to Kabul.

"By August the [*Taliban*] group was broke and desperate. Yet suddenly they were rolling in cash and confidence. On Sept. 27 the Taliban marched into Kabul. Former mujahedin commanders close to the Taliban say the bonanza arrived courtesy of Osama bin Ladin... Afghan and Western sources say bin Laden's gift to Omar amounted to \$3 million." (Newsweek 13.10.1997) According to Russian sources, the money, exactly three million US\$, was a "ransom" paid directly by Russia. (Interfax 29.8.1996) Perhaps it did not make much of a difference, who delivered the money - and much more than worth of that in arms - to the *Taliban*?

Viktor But was born in 1967, probably in Smolensk. He has used also the names Viktor Bulakin and Vadim Aminov. He carries five passports: two Russians, one Ukrainian, and probably one Tajik and one Uzbek. (Guardian 23.12.2000) He served as navigator in the Soviet air force, and graduated from the *Military Institute for Foreign Languages* in Moscow, known as a GRU spy school. By 1991, But had a career in the KGB, assisted by his father-in-law, who was no less a character than the Brezhnev family member Tsvigun. (Guardian 23.12.2000)

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, But served in UN peace troops in Angola. (Sunday Telegraph 22.7.2001) He still has a house in Johannesburg, now used as a brothel. In 1995, But appeared in Belgium as the owner of a cargo flight company. He flew arms to Afghanistan, since 1997 to East Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, and since 1998 to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Destinations may have included also Bosnia, Serbia, Iraq, Eritrea or Georgia (the end users are often unknown), Peru, and Sri Lanka

(Tamil Tigers). (Jane's Intelligence Review, February 2002; The Washington Monthly 1/2002)

But's partners were Soviet-trained air force generals of the *Taliban*. To be closer to Afghanistan, he moved in 1997 to the United Arab Emirates. When UN sanctions forced the United Arab Emirates to check the cargo going to Afghanistan, in January 2001, Bill Clinton's administration did its last favour to friendly Russia by allowing an exception for carriers registered in Russia. (LAT 20.1.2002) For Clinton's administration, Russians were always above any suspicions as sponsors of Islamic terrorism. Once again, the British MI6 was needed to turn CIA's attention to the right direction. (Sunday Times 17.2.2002)

Russian disinformation labelled the *Taliban* a client of Pakistan, although some observers had noticed already by 1997, that the ISI had surprisingly little leverage on the *Taliban*. Even if the *Taliban* were a creation by Benazir **Bhutto's** (1993-1996) interior minister, Nasrullah **Babar**, they had soon freed themselves from any gratitude and dependence.

In June 2001, a fax message from Peshawar, revealed by Pakistani intelligence, described But's role as *Taliban's* lifeline. Arms should be routed either overland via Turkmenistan, or by air to Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan - the airplanes, flown by reliable Armenian pilots, would then fake emergency landings in Afghanistan. (WT 11.11.2001)

But has 250-300 employees, probably mostly Russians, Ukrainians, and Armenians. According to a Russian newspaper, the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, But's main source of arms is Transdnestria, the Moldovan slice of land occupied by Russian army and administered by Soviet-nostalgic communists. (BBC 27.2.2002) This is also where terrorists of the Turkish PKK have found refugee. According to *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 2002, "Pakistani smugglers with ties to Ukraine" escorted possibly up to 200 *al-Qayda* militants to Ukraine. The

"Pakistani smuggler" was, however, But's associate, and the destination probably Transdnestria.

But himself owns a five-storey house in Moscow, where he appeared in a radio studio to declare his innocence. Shortly before, the Russian Interpol officer had claimed that they had searched for But for years, and could guarantee, that he was not in Russia. (LAT 26.2.2002) But's brother had a house in Islamabad. (WP 26.2.2002)

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the head of the Russian Interpol office proudly declared, that after four years of investigations, Russian law-enforcement agencies could assure, that But was nowhere in Russia. At the same time, But appeared in the *Ekho Moskv*y radio programme, saying that he had lived all the time in Moscow. He evaded questions by claiming, that he was a businessman, envied and therefore persecuted by Americans, that he had no ties to Russian intelligence, that he was involved only in air transportation since 1992, and that he never went "into the arms trade as such" - after all, "What does 'arms trade' mean?" But asked philosophically. He repeated the common claim that "Americans helped in cultivating the Taliban and controlled it through Pakistan." (NYT 1.3.2002)

The same night, a Russian Interior Ministry spokesman explained that police were not seeking to arrest But, because they had no evidence of any wrongdoing. (LAT 1.3.2002) Instead, the Russian media started to explain that But was only working for a Ukrainian Jew, Vadim **Rabinovich**, who must be an Israeli agent. This claim had been originally presented by the reorganized Russian foreign intelligence service SVR. (Der Spiegel 1/7.1.2002)

The But affair may have required from Russia more than just diversion in the media. In mid-October 2001, tension between Russian and Abkhazian border was very high, and experts predicted an "anti-terror invasion" of Georgia by Russian forces. This did not happen, however, as suddenly everything cooled down. At the same time, Russia's foreign ministry had protested *The Washington Times'* report

about *al-Qayda's* arms trade relations to "Russian mafia", asking for exchange of information between security services. (RFE/RL Russian Federation Report 1.10.2001; DN 16.10.2001) When the But affair was discussed in public, in February 2002, Georgia invited US military assistance. This caused a fury in Russia, but unexpectedly, the Kremlin appeared paralyzed to react.

Some years ago, Clinton's Russia expert Strobe **Talbott** had entertained great expectations because the FBI was allowed to open an office and to train Russian colleagues to fight terrorism in Moscow. This was before the spy scandal of the FBI. They failed, however, to investigate the September 1999 terror wave, which was pinned collectively on Chechens, but was obviously committed by Russian secret services. At the end of October, 2000, FSB colonel Aleksandr **Litvinenko** sought asylum in Britain and claimed to have evidence of FSB's guilt for the bombings. (Monitor 2.11.2000; BBC 6.11.2000) Other Russians have expressed suspicions on GRU's involvement. (The Independent 6.11.2000; Monitor 11.1.2000; TN 3.2.2000) Interpol, the FBI, and their Russian colleagues appear to be unable not only to investigate terrorism but also to apprehend well-known Russian "merchants of death" in Moscow, despite of international warrants for arrest.

Talbott's "post-Cold War" thesis was that simple good will, trusting Russian officials, and supporting financially Russia's supposedly reforming institutions, would pay back in the form of increasing mutual trust and genuine friendship. According to a polling conducted by the US State Department, quite the opposite has happened: over 70 % of Russians had a favourable opinion of the USA in 1993, but only 37 % in February 2000. (Forbes.Com 31.10.2000)

There might indeed be a Chechen connection, but hardly the like Interpol's Russian officials would be investigating: the former communist boss of Soviet Chechnya, and Russia's puppet president (1995-1996) Doku **Zavgayev**, was appointed as Russia's ambassador to Tanzania shortly before Bin Ladin's associates blew up buildings there. US



federal prosecutors found a letter between terrorists, who repeatedly referred to the group's members in Kenya by the code name "the fish people". (NYT 23.1.2000) The arms flown by But's company to Afghanistan were listed as "fish from Tanzania". (WT 11.11.2001) Where do fish dwell? Perhaps in an aquarium, which happens to be the nickname of the GRU headquarter in Moscow... (<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/russia/gru/aquarium.htm>)

Also, the PKK leader Abdullah **Öcalan**'s decision to fly to Nairobi, in February 1999, may be added to a list of curious East African coincidences.

We should also remember the career of Yevgeni **Primakov**, KGB operative in Egypt in the 1960s, chief of the SVR from 1991 to 1996, foreign minister from 1996 to 1998, and prime minister from 1998 to 1999. His appointment into Chernomyrdin's government in December 1996 followed two months after the sacking of Aleksandr **Lebed**, the popular general who made peace in Chechnya and advocated strong measures against the *Taliban*. "The rivalry between SVR and foreign ministry ... ended in decisive victory for the SVR with Primakov's appointment as foreign minister ... in December 1996." (Andrew & Mitrokhin, p. 562)

Primakov appears to have carried with him a sharp policy change: instead of negotiating a final peace deal with the Chechens, as had been agreed by Lebed, the FSB encouraged provocative Islamists, who committed murders and kidnappings from 1997 to 1999, scaring most foreign aid workers and reporters out of the land, and providing the Russian government with an excuse for a renewed intervention. Obviously, this was a method successfully exercised in Afghanistan to oust the Rabbani government from Kabul.

During his travels in the Middle East in the 1980s, Primakov had been known to talk about Free Mason and Jewish conspiracies. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, p. 573)

According to a Russian newspaper article by Oleg **Lurye**, Bin Ladin's cousin had meetings with the daughter of Boris **Yeltsin**. (RFE/RL Business Watch 12.3.2002)

## **Soviet Islamists in Russia**

Islamists in modern Russia are KGB-trained provocateurs, who fight traditions and nationalism, and dream about a re-established Soviet Union. Their perception of Islam resembles more a Communist caricature than the historical roots of ethnically mainly Caucasian and Tatar Muslims. To understand the development to this better, KGB's activities in the Middle East can be divided in five-year periods:

1968-1972 the KGB puts great hopes on international terrorism in general, and

particularly on Palestinians, and other Arab Socialists. Focus on Egypt.

1973-1977 the KGB is disappointed and Arabs are frustrated, but Saudi-sponsored

Islamism provides an alternative political ideology for promoting

anti-American and pro-Russian sentiments. Focus on Iraq.

1978-1982 the KGB puts great hopes on the "Islamic revolution" of Iran, and its

expansion to Arab countries, while exporting communism into Afghanistan.

Focus on Iran. End of Andropov's era (1967-1982) in the KGB.

1983-1987 the KGB is disappointed, but accommodated by the dominance of Islamism

over orthodox Communism in Iran. Focus on Syria and Afghanistan. End of

GRU chief Pyotr **Ivashutin's** era (1963-1987).

1988-1992 the KGB withdraws its "active measures" inside the Soviet borders, and

concentrates in provoking "ethnic conflicts" to divide and rule

separatists in the Caucasus and elsewhere in the disintegrating empire.

The KGB is split (1991), and the GRU has chiefs with no intelligence

background (1987-1991) but establishes huge post-Soviet military bases

in Karabakh, Abkhazia, and Transdnestria.

1993-1997 the KGB (FSB and SVR) re-establishes communist power in former Soviet

Republics (except the Baltic countries) but fails to do it in Chechnya.

Afghanistan remains divided as a new group of provocateurs, the *Taliban*,

emerges to challenge the freedom fighters. The GRU under Fyodor **Ladygin**

(1992-1997), has more resources at its disposal than the SVR under

Primakov (1991-1996).

Through these phases, Russian secret services gained a tight hold on international terrorism, and specially on Islamism. It was nothing new. During the 1920s, Soviet intelligence had succeeded in thoroughly infiltrating fiercely anti-Soviet monarchist emigrant organizations. Furthermore, "dozens of mythical organizations came into being. One of these, the 'Trust', has become well known in both Western and Soviet writings. For many years the Soviet leaders claimed to have cunningly infiltrated a monarchist resistance organization, but in the 1970s they

admitted that they themselves had created it. ... Similar ones attacked... the church hierarchy of every denomination; and 'nationalists' inside and outside the country, with a 'line' of provocation covering each political tendency within each major ethnic subdivision - Ukrainians, Cossacks, Armenians, Georgians, Central Asians. Fragmentary information on at least two dozen 'lines' has become known in the West through the years." (Deriabin & Bagley, p. 262 and 263)

Unfortunately, "Soviet provocation... remains little understood in the West. People safe in a democratic system may find it difficult to conceive that rulers would systematically use such hostile techniques against their own subjects." (Deriabin & Bagley, p. 252)

Back in the 1920s, anti-Soviet emigrants were compromised in front of western governments to reduce their credibility, and they were used in domestic propaganda to stage sabotage actions, to scare the populace, and to provoke dissidents into revealing themselves. This excellent experience was certainly in the minds of post-Andropov and post-Ivashutin intelligence officers, who "may in fact have launched a new golden era of provocation. ... A blatant example was the work of the far-right anti-Semitic organization called *Pamyat* (Memory)." (Deriabin & Bagley, p. 251 and 261)

For the development of Soviet Islamism, the years 1988-1992 were crucial. The KGB fought for its very existence, and the GRU too was called to fight internal enemies within Soviet borders, instead of its traditional foreign military intelligence work. Although the GRU had fewer agents abroad than the KGB (in relation 7 to 10), it was claimed to possess more financial resources by the mid-1980s. (Kuzichkin, p. 274) Where was the money spent when the "Cold War" was declared ended, traditional military intelligence lost motivation, and left-wing terrorist organizations of the 1970s vanished from sight? Obviously, GRU resources were concentrated to activities within Soviet borders, to arm and train provocateurs. It is known, that special forces were called from Afghanistan to crush

Crimean Tatar demonstrations in Moscow, in July 1987. They appeared soon in the bloody incidents of Tbilisi (1989) and Baku (1990), and in Baltic capitals (1991).

GRU's Afghan experience was, how to manipulate Islamists and to make Communists (of the *Khalq* faction) to grow beards and join their declared enemies. This "*Khalq* strategy" provided a successful alternative to the more orthodox "*Parcham* strategy" that relied on ideologically less unholy alliances. When Soviet property was privatized, the GRU naturally made money out of sale of air craft and arms.

As Finnish researcher Anssi **Kullberg** has recently pointed out in his well documented master's thesis on Russian geopolitics, the *Islamic Renaissance Party* was founded in Astrakhan, in June 1990, under KGB surveillance, to argue for a Soviet and global Islam against separatist movements among Muslim nations.

The *Islamic Party of Azerbaijan* was founded in 1991 by a philologist, "a typical representative of the post-Soviet lumpen-intelligentsia", who was both anti-Turkic and anti-Semitic. Its members organized the burning of an Israeli flag and training of "Islamic brigades". The party fought an international Masonic (!) conspiracy to spread the American model of civilization, until its leadership was arrested in 1996, and accused of spying for Iran. (Igor **Rotar**: Islamic Fundamentalism in Azerbaijan - Myth or Reality? Prism 8/2000)

Soviet sponsorship for Islamism has been exposed by a Chechen nationalist leader, Ahmad **Zakayev**, in a revealing booklet on "*Wahhabism - Kremlin's drugs against national liberation organizations*". (Dziennik Polski 30.9.2001)

Finnish Polish researcher Zofia **Grodzinska-Klemetti**, who visited Chechnya during and between the war years, has also stressed how both Russian and Saudi intelligence were regarded by Chechens as parallel forces undermining the peace and liberty of Chechen society. She noticed in her lecture in Helsinki on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001, that anti-Semitic propaganda was always in Russian language, and

that God was always addressed in Arabic, as Allah, instead of using more popular appellations in local languages. It has been very typical for western Islamists to insist on the use of God's Arabic name. Obviously, anti-Semitism did not emerge from Caucasian or Russian Turkic (Tatar) cultures, but was imported in the name of Arab-centered Islam.

When the Soviet colonies had nevertheless declared independence in 1991, militant Muslims like the Chechen **Basayev** brothers, and some of Hikmatyar's "Afghan Arabs", were invited by the GRU to join an "Islamic cause" on behalf of Abkhazia against Georgia. Although the war of 1992-1993 was depicted as a war of independence for the traditionally Muslim Abkhazians, the Basayevs and other Muslim volunteers soon found out, that this was far from the truth. The so-called Abkhazians were old-time Communists who refused to accept democratic changes. Instead of gaining more autonomy, Abkhazia - just like Karabakh and Transdnestria - became practically operated by Russian secret services, and engaged in international arms trade and training of terrorists.

According to American Turkish researcher Ali M. **Koknar**, Shamil Basayev went through military training in Afghanistan from April until July 1994; Indian researcher Vinod **Anand** dates his visit from March to May 1994 - anyway before the *Taliban* emerged. His host must then still have been Hikmatyar, or one of his Soviet-trained subordinates. There has never been evidence of any contacts between the Chechen leadership and the *Taliban*, except for a private mission of the former Chechen vice president in early 2000, when Russia had already invaded Chechnya for the second time.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria had declared independence in 1991, and for the first three years, Russia tried a variety of tricks to overpower it. What had succeeded by 1993 in Georgia, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan, failed to bring results in Chechnya. In the end, Russia started two full-scale invasions against this tiny Caucasian nation. Very few Islamists have shown any sympathy for their fellow Muslims. Both Iran and Iraq have applauded Russia's invasions. Although Russia has blamed Muslim

terrorists ("Afghan Arabs") for the tough Chechen resistance, more Ukrainian or ethnic Russian (!) volunteers have been sighted among Chechen freedom-fighters than Arabs or Afghans.

There are tactical similarities between Chechnya and Afghanistan. Equally sinister forces operated in both countries. Provocateurs were used by Russian secret services to destabilize governments, and the world media was largely kept disinformed about what was going on. At some point, while Afghans were accused for fighting in Chechnya, Chechens were accused for fighting in Afghanistan. Such astonishingly illogical accusations were uncritically transmitted by Western media. Few journalists bothered to ask, why these "mercenaries" remained invisible, immortal (no bodies found on battle grounds), and impossible to be ever caught alive (unless Russia had its prisoners-of-war executed before they could be interrogated), or what sense would it make to have such a bold "students' exchange" between two countries without a common border or even a common neighbour. The logistic risks alone would certainly discourage such practices.

Beside this, the origins of such inconsistent claims could be traced quite easily. The myth of Chechens in Afghanistan was invented by the *Times of India* in December 1999, concerning at first only refugees, women and children. By April 2000, there appeared in *The Indian Express* and *The Hindustan Times* articles, distributed in the internet by well-known disinformation agents, stories about Arab, Pakistani and Afghan militants, who allegedly had been to Chechnya in August 1999, but returned to fight in Kyrgyzstan before retiring to Afghanistan. (Vinod Anand: Export of Holy Terror to Chechnya From Pakistan and Afghanistan, Strategic Analysis 24.3/2000) Indian newspapers have been always useful for launching Russian disinformation.

In April 2000, the alleged Afghans in Chechnya and Chechen refugees in Afghanistan were suddenly turned into Chechen fighters in Afghanistan, by the Russian media. (Gazeta.ru 26.4.2000) When a Russian TV crew claimed on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2000, that Masud had admitted the

existence of "not yet many" Chechens in Afghanistan, Itar-TASS news agency reported "dozens of Chechens" sighted in Afghanistan, which Reuters and BBC inflated into "thousands of Chechens". So, a myth was born. Although Kazakstani *Khabar TV* searched 3260 prisoners in Afghanistan to find a Chechen, the only candidate turned out to be an Azerbaijani. (BBC 4.1.2002) A Russian newspaper reporter managed to meet a Circassian, who must have worked hard to explain his American interrogators the differences of Caucasian nationalities. (MN 6.-12.2.2002) There were more Westerners among *al-Qayda* prisoners.

Mysteriously, none of these Chechens could ever be interviewed - unlike two captured Chinese Uyghurs, who were presented in probably every respectable Western newspaper. (<http://www.dawn.com/2001/04/16/top15.htm>) This, of course, pleased China, but provided Russia little evidence to substantiate its own myths on terrorism.

It has been alleged that most *al-Qayda* militants in Afghanistan were of Saudi Arabian or Egyptian origin, but passports could be stolen or forged. Records captured in Kabul, include mostly Yemeni names, followed by Algerians, and individual Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinian, Kuwaiti, and Tunisians. (Jane's Defence Weekly 30.1.2002) *Al-Qayda's* third man, "**Abu Zubaydah**", was first declared a Saudi Arabian of Palestinian origin, but then recognized as an Iraqi activist of the Arab Socialist Baath party. (NYT 14.2.2002; Der Spiegel 8/18.2.2002) Although they are Arabs all the same, identities could provide clues about political backgrounds.

Chechens have been accused for various mischief in Russia. Some years ago, there were stories about toxic material hidden in Moscow parks by Chechen terrorists. Now we know that the Soviet Army had dumped chemical armament into a Moscow park 30 years earlier. (TOL 12.9.2001) All traces seem to lead back to the "Third Rome" and its "praetorians", the Russian military intelligence, GRU. According to the Russian president himself, in his speech at the "Aquarium" on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001, as many as 421 GRU officers had perished in



Chechnya during two years of war, and the GRU continues to have a role in Russian foreign affairs! (NIS Observed 28.11.2001)

What a role?!

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I was, unfortunately, unable to find the interesting accounts on Russian secret services by Aleksandr Litvinenko ("The FSB Blows Up Russia", or "An Attack on Russia", 2002), Vasili Mitrokhin (2002), Vladimir Sakharov & Umberto Tosi ("High Treason", 1980), Arkady Shevchenko ("Breaking with Moscow", 1985), Vladimir Solovyov & Elena Klepikova ("Behind the High Kremlin Walls", 1986), I. G. Starinov ("Over the Abyss", 1995), Claude Sterling ("Terrorism in the Soviet Connection", 1984), and Viktor Suvorov ("Aquarium", 1985, or "Inside the Aquarium", 1986). I would also suggest the reader Ronald Kessler's "The Richest Man of the World - Adnan Khashoggi" (1986).

### **Abbreviations for media**

BBC British Broadcasting Company

DN Dagens Nyheter (Swedish daily)

IHT International Herald Tribune

IPS International Press Service  
 LAT Los Angeles Times  
 MN Moscow News  
 NZZ Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Swiss daily)  
 RFE/RL Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty  
 TN Turkistan Newsletter  
 TOL Transitions Online  
 WP Washington Post  
 WT Washington Times

## **Index of persons**

Sometimes combined Arab names appear in English separated (specially Abdul-), or with slightly different spelling because of differences in pronunciation. I have thus retained Mohammed instead of proper Muhammad for Persian names. Some of these variations are listed below [in parentheses]. The Saudi use of "Bin" instead of "ibn" (son) actually makes the patronymic a surname - for example, Ladin was not the father of Usama, but his great-grandfather.

Abdulmalik, [Abdelmalek]	Anwar	Lebanese	writer
Abdurrahman, Borjan", <i>Taliban</i>		Turan	"Mullah officer
"Abu Zubaydah" Iraqi terrorist			
Ahmad, Khabir Afghan researcher			
Akbar, Muhammad <i>Taliban</i> officer			

Aliyev, Heydar KGB officer, President of Azerbaijan 1993-

Allix, Stéphane French researcher

Amin, Hafizullah President of Afghanistan 1979

Anand, Vinod Indian researcher

Andropov, Yuri KGB chief 1967-1982, Soviet leader 1982-1984

Arafat, Yasser Palestinian leader

Atta, Muhammad Egyptian terrorist

Azzam, Abdullah Palestinian writer

Babar, Nasrullah Interior Minister of Pakistan

Basayev, Shamil Chechen officer, brother of Shirvani Basayev

Bearden, Milton CIA officer

Begenzhev, Gurbanduri Defence Minister of Turkmenistan

Beheshti, Mohammed Ayatollah, Iranian leader 1981

Ben Bella, Ahmad President of Algeria 1962-1965

Bhutto, Benazir Prime Minister of Pakistan 1988-1990 and 1993-1996

Bhutto, Murtaza Pakistani left-wing politician, brother of Benazir Bhutto

Bin Baz, Abdulaziz Saudi Mufti

Bin Ladin, Usamah Saudi terrorist [Osama bin Laden]

Bodansky, Yossef American researcher

Brezhnev, Leonid Soviet leader 1964-1982

Brutents, Karen KGB officer

But, Viktor KGB officer [Victor Bout]

Chamran, Mustafa Ali Defence Minister of Iran

"Che Guevara" Cuban terrorist

Chernomyrdin, Viktor Prime Minister of Russia 1993-1998

Clinton, Bill President of the USA 1993-2001

Dawalibi, Muhammad Maruf ad- Prime Minister of Syria 1951 and 1961-1962

Dostum, Abdurrashid Afghan officer

Faysal King of Saudi Arabia 1964-1975

Gerecht, Reuel Marc CIA officer

Gharazi, Mohammed Oil Minister of Iran

Ghotbzadeh, Sadegh Foreign Minister of Iran 1979-1980

Gilani, Muhammad *Taliban* officer

Gore, Al Vice President of the USA 1993-2001

Grodzinska-Klemetti, Zofia Finnish Polish researcher

Habash, George Palestinian terrorist

Haddad, Wadi Palestinian terrorist

"Hagop Hagopian" Iraqi terrorist

Hawatmeh, Nayef Palestinian terrorist

Hikmatyar, Gulbuddin Prime Minister of Afghanistan 1993-1994 and 1996 [Hekmatyar]

Islam, Hussein Shaikh al- Lebanese terrorist

Ivashutin, Pyotr GRU chief 1963-1987

Kalugin, Oleg KGB officer

Karmal, Babrak President of Afghanistan 1979-1986

Khalid King of Saudi Arabia 1975-1982

Khan, Azmat Hayat Pakistani researcher

Khomeini, Ruhollah Ayatollah, Iranian leader 1979-1989

Kikot, V. KGB officer

Koknar, Ali M. American Turkish researcher

Kullberg, Anssi Finnish researcher

Ladygin, Fedor GRU chief 1992-1997

Lebed, Aleksandr Russian officer

Litvinenko, Aleksandr FSB officer

Lurye, Oleg Russian reporter

Mackenzie, Richard CNN reporter

Masud, Ahmadshah Defence Minister of Afghanistan [Ahmed Shah Massoud]

Mitrokhin, Vasili KGB officer

Moti, Abdulkarim Moroccan writer [Mot'ee]

Najibullah President of Afghanistan 1987-1992

Nazarov, Muhammad KNB chief

Niyazov, Saparmurad President of Turkmenistan

Öcalan, Abdullah Turkish terrorist

Omar Mullah, *Taliban* leader

Pipes, Daniel American researcher

Primakov, Yevgeni SVR chief, Prime Minister of Russia 1998-1999

Qutb, Said Egyptian terrorist

Rabbani, Burhanuddin President of Afghanistan 1992-2001

Rabinovich, Vadim Ukrainian businessman

Reymov, Khosse Turkmen officer

Rotar, Igor Russian researcher

Sadat, Anwar President of Egypt 1970-1981

Saddam Hussein President of Iraq 1979-

Sawar, Shah *Taliban* officer

Shahin, Jérôme Lebanese writer

Talbott, Strobe American left-wing politician

Tanai, Shahnawaz Defence Minister of Afghanistan

Taraki, Nurmuhammad President of Afghanistan 1978-1979

Topol, Eduard American Russian writer

Tsvigun, Semyon KGB officer

Turki Prince, Saudi intelligence chief 1977-2001

Yassine, Abdussalam Moroccan writer

Yazdi, Ibrahim Foreign Minister of Iran?

Yeltsin, Boris President of Russia 1991-1999

Zakayev, Ahmad Deputy Prime Minister of Chechnya

Zavgayev, Doku Russian Chechen politician

Zawahiri, Ayman az- Egyptian terrorista.